

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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P R 051620Z MAY 75

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3506

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0518

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MILI AO

SUBJECT: REPORT OF ATTEMPTED MPLA COUP

1. SUMMARY. TWO SOURCES IN LUANDA HAVE TOLD US OF AN ATTEMPT BY MPLA TO STAGE A COUP IN LUANDA ON MAY DAY. NETO REPORTEDLY ASKED UNITA LEADER JONAS SAVIMBI TO JOIN THE COUP BUT SAVIMBI REFUSED. OFFICERS OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT HAD AGREED TO KEEP THEIR TROOPS ON THE SIDELINES AND ACQUIESCE IN THE COUP, ALLOW THE IMMEDIATE PROCLAMATION OF A REPUBLIC AND WITHDRAW PORTUGUESE FORCES. THE COUP ATTEMPT WAS NEVER INITIAED BECAUSE OF SAVIMBI'S REFUSAL TO JOIN AND THE CANCELLATION OF THE MAY DAY DEMONSTRATION, THE ACTIONS OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER. END SUMMARY.

2. A CONGEN OFFICER WAS TOLD BY TWO NON-OFFICIAL SOURCES THAT MPLA PLANNED A COUP FOR MAY 1. THE MOST COMPLETE ACCOUNT WAS GIVEN BY A FRENCH JOURNALIST WHO SAID HE WAS TOLD THIS BY
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SAVIMBI. THE OTHER SOURCE WAS AN ANGOLAN NEWSPAPERMAN.

3. ACCORDING TO THE FRENCHMAN, SAVIMBI SAID HE WAS APPROACHED IN LATE APRIL BY AGOSTINHO NETO WHO OFFERED SAVIMBI THE POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER IN RETURN FOR SAVIMBI'S COOPERATION AND SUPPORT IN THE COUP. THE GOVERNMENT WAS TO BE HEADED BY NETO. MPLA'S PLANS CALLED FOR SEVERAL DAYS OF PROGRESSIVELY INCREASING VIOLENCE BETWEEN MPLA AND FNLA IN LUANDA, WITH A NEW EMPHASIS ON ATTACKING WHITE HOMES AND FAMILIES ON THE EDGES OF THE BLACK GHETTOES AS WELL AS LOOTING AND RIOTING BY ARMED BLACK CIVILIANS. THE IDEA WAS TO CAUSE A WHITE BACKLASH THAT WOULD TURN THE CONFLICT INTO A WHITE-BLACK ONE, RATHER THAN FNLA-MPLA. ON MAY DAY THERE WOULD BE A HUGH MARCH BY BLACKS INTO THE CITY. THE DISPLACED WHITES WOULD BE FEARFUL OF FURTHER BLACK VIOLENCE IN THE CENTER CITY AND WOULD BE AGITATED BY PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY OPERATIVES PLANTED AMONGST THEM TO ATTACK THE BLACK PARADE. THE RESULTING BLOOD BATH WOULD GIVE NETO AND SAVIMBI THE EXCUSE TO ORDER THEIR TROOPS IN TO END THE KILLING AND ESTABLISH ORDER. THEY WOULD ASSERT THE PORTUGUESE WERE UNABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR SIDES OF THE ALVOR AGREEMENT AND WOULD IMMEDIATELY PROCLAIM INDEPENDENCE. THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY FORCES WOULD NOT INTERVENE. TWO ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT OFFICERS REPORTEDLY JUST ARRIVED FROM LISBON, GUARANTEED THE NON-INTERVENTION OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMY AGAINST THE LOOTERS OR THE MAY DAY DEMONSTRATION, THUS MAKING A WHITE-BLACK CLASH INEVITABLE. THEY ALSO REPORTEDLY GUARANTEED THE ACQUIESCENCE OF LISBON TO THE IMMEDIATE PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

4. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT PARTS OF THE SCENARIO WERE FOLLOWED. THERE WAS A NOTABLE WHITE-BLACK ELEMENT TO THE RECENT VIOLENCE THAT WASN'T NOTED IN THE OTHER RECENT MPLA-FNLA ALTERCATIONS AND IT SEEMED TO MANY OBSERVERS THAT THE LOOTING AND RIOTING WERE BEING DIRECTED BY ARMED CIVILIANS OF MPLA, THE "POPULAR POWER." THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE MAY DAY PARADE WAS MEANT AS A PROVOCATION. IT WAS PLANNED TO BE A MASSIVE OUTPOURING OF BLACK WORKERS, ARMED WITH HOES, SHOVELS, CANE KNIVES AND OTHER IMPLEMENTS, WHO WOULD MARCH FROM SEVERAL BLACK AREAS ON A CONVERGING ROUTE THROUGH THE EUROPEAN SECTOR TO THE CENTER OF THE CITY WHERE A RALLY WOULD BE HELD. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT NETO WAS IN THE CITY FOR THE ENTIRE WAVE OF VIOLENCE, DID NOT HIMSELF ISSUE A PERSONAL APPEAL FOR A CEASE FIRE UNTIL MAY 1. THERE WAS ALSO THE ARRIVAL OF FOREIGN COMMUNIST ELEMENTS, INCLUDING A RUSSIAN

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AND SOME BLOC PERSONNEL, PERHAPS TO HELP DIRECT THE FINAL STAGES OF THE COUP. MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR IN A PRESS RELEASE ON MAY 4 ANNOUNCED THEIR EXPULSION FROM ANGOLA (SEPTTEL.). FINALLY, THERE HAVE BEEN RELIABLE REPORTS HERE AND ELSEWHERE THAT LARGE AMOUNTS OF SOVIET AND BLOC WEAPONS WERE SENT TO ANGOLA WITHIN THE PAST TWO WEEKS.

5. IF THERE WAS A PLAN, IT HAD TWO WEAK POINTS: SAVIMBI WOULD NEVER

AGREE TO SUCH A SCHEME AT THIS POINT. THE OTHER POINT IS THE COOPERATION OF THE ARMY. INSTEAD OF REMAINING ALOOF THE ARMY IN FACT WAS ORDERED BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER AND DID CONFRONT THE "POPULAR POWER" OF MPLA AND ARMED CLASHES AND PROHIBITED THE MAY DAY MARCH. IF THERE WAS ANY INTERNAL DISSENSION THE HIGH COMMISSIONER APPARENTLY WON OUT.

6. THE EVIDENCE IS NOT CONCLUSIVE THAT THERE WAS A MPLA COUP ATTEMPT, BUT DOES INDICATE THAT A PLAN OF THIS NATURE MAY HAVE BEEN CONTEMPLATED. GIVEN THE CHAOTIC POLITICAL SITUATION AND MPLA'S BLEAK LONG-TERM PROSPECTS, NETO COULD FEEL THE NEED TO MOVE BEFORE HIS ADVERSARIES IN UNITA AND FNLA FORM A COHESIVE FRONT AGAINST HIM.

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